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# DUTY

"Truth is the shining thing  
Let man's life be true"

Seelye



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# DUTY

*A BOOK FOR SCHOOLS*

*2581*

BY

JULIUS H. SEELYE

*D.D., LL.D., Late President of Amherst College*

BOSTON, U.S.A.

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1891

*2581*



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## PREFACE.



IN this little book I have attempted to give to the cardinal principles and the chief facts of morals a treatment which should be thorough and at the same time apprehensible to the mind of a child. I have tried to be simple without being superficial,—not an easy undertaking, I am aware, as I am also conscious how far the result here reached falls below the standard which the perfect book requires.

In some points, as perhaps those relating to freedom and to property, where serious errors are very easy, I have preferred to state the principles which I believe the child will approve in his mature thought, even if he does not fully apprehend them now, rather than to leave the matter clear but incomplete. Knowing as I do that there can be no abiding basis of morality altogether separate from religion, I have not sought to make a book which one who calls himself an atheist would like. But



I believe there is nothing here from which any theist, of whatever name, will dissent.

Some friends who have kindly listened to these pages before their publication have suggested that a larger expansion of certain parts of the book would be wise, but this it seems to me should be done rather by the teacher than by the writer. I have kept in mind constantly the quality of a text-book for schools, and, in my judgment, that is the best text-book which being also clear and comprehensive is the most compact. I have scrupulously striven to keep out everything redundant, having pity for the child's memory laden with useless verbiage. A good text-book is like good grain, to be planted for a harvest, rather than to be ground for bread.

I was surprised and almost startled in beginning this undertaking not to be able to find anything of the sort in our tongue. We have many and admirable text-books on morals for use in colleges, some of which are advantageously used in high schools, but a simple and systematic manual on this theme, suitable for an early grade of schools, I have not found in English, though there are some excellent books of the kind in French, as they are not wanting also in German; these last, however,



being mainly in the form of catechisms with prominent reference to religious instruction. I hope, therefore, that what I have here tried to do may not be altogether in vain.

Any suggestions which teachers who may use these pages may make for their improvement will be welcomed.

AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS,

May, 1891.





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# DUTY.



## I. DUTY.

THERE is nothing so important to any one as his duty. Life itself is of less concern than duty, for life is a failure where duty fails.

*What then is duty?*

Its first meaning is something **due**. Duty is a debt. It is **owed**, and therefore we speak of duty as what **ought** to be done.

But *what is this debt?* And *who owes it?* And *to whom is it due?*

In the first place, the debt is one which he who owes it has the power to pay. What ought to be done can be done. Nothing impossible is a duty.

But on the other hand duty claims all that can be done. It lays its law on all our powers. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, should all be done as



duty bids. And not only the deeds which others see, but the secret choice and purpose known alone to him who has it, should obey duty. Complete control of heart and life is the debt owed in duty.

*Who owes it?*

The child owes it. The man owes it. Every person owes it. Not the animals or plants, not the mountains, the rivers, the ocean, not the winds, the rain, the sunshine, — not these, but every human being owes this debt of duty. Whoever he may be or wherever he may be, duty never leaves him. He may know very little, but if he knows anything, he knows something which he ought to do, and this something is his duty. He may have very little power of choice, but if he can choose anything, he can choose duty, and duty claims his every choice.

*To whom is this debt due?*

Every debt must be due to some person, and all duty is due to God. The voice of duty is the voice of God. When we say that duty claims the heart and life of every one, we mean only that this is God's claim. He is the true Lord of all. His law must always be the highest and the best. For He is our Father. All that we have is from Him. In Him we live and move and have our



being. He claims only His own when He calls for all that we have and are.

But He claims this for our sakes. When He lays His law of duty upon us, it is for our good always. When we do our duty, it is not He, but we ourselves who are enriched thereby. The sunshine gains nothing by our walking in it, nor the air by our breathing it, but we gain light and breath by using these as they are fitted for our use. And God, who gives us the sunshine and the air, gives them for our profit altogether, and the use He bids us make of any of His gifts is the only way in which the gift can be a good to us. It would be a curse instead of a blessing if we should use it in the wrong way. The wrong way is the way **wrung**, or twisted from the right way; and the right way is the straight way to the good which God would have us take. The right way is always the best way, for it is always the sure and shortest way to the highest good. We always lose by leaving it.

The wrong way is wrong because it is turned away from the right, and because thus turned it always leads to ill. The right and wrong are altogether different ways, and they never can agree. The right always leads to a blessing, and the wrong always to a curse.

When God, who is our Father, made our way of duty



always to be the right way, He made it thus our highest privilege to do our duty.

The laws of duty are like the laws of health. They give both strength and liberty. It is sickness, and not health, from which comes our bondage, and it is the right, and not the wrong, which makes us free.

If we were wise and acted well, we should turn to duty as the plant turns its leaves to the sunlight, and we should welcome duty as gladly as the watcher for the morning welcomes the day.

*How is duty known?*

Every person knows some duty. He knows it in his own heart. He may not be able to tell why it is, but he knows that he ought to do right, and he is just as certain of this as he can be of anything. He hears a voice in his own soul, bidding him do what is right ; he has an inner light in which he sees a law laid upon him and binding him to duty. This hearing ear, this seeing eye, which every person has in his inner soul, we call his conscience. His conscience is his first teacher in the knowledge of duty. If he should obey his conscience first and always, he would always know his duty.

But every person does not always follow his conscience. Duty, though always good, is sometimes hard, and is not



always done. It seems often easier to do wrong than right, and thus the wrong is chosen. When this takes place, it dulls the voice and dims the light of duty in the soul. Conscience warns us before and reproaches us after the wrong deed, but when we keep doing wrong, these warnings and reproaches keep growing feebler until they sometimes almost cease, and both the light of duty and the gladness of life go out together.

To get back the knowledge we have lost, we must take up the duty we have left. The quick ear and clear eye will come from the dutiful heart. The pure in heart shall see God, and thus shall know His will.

Not only does every duty which we ourselves do make duty clearer, but the duties also which others do help us to see where our duty lies and what may be our want of duty.

Shakespeare had this in mind when in Othello<sup>1</sup> he makes Iago say:—

“ If Cassio do remain,  
He hath a daily beauty in his life  
That makes me ugly.”

Duty is like the sun which shines wherever it appears, and wrong-doing of any sort is the darkness which the light alone can reveal and drive away.

<sup>1</sup> Act V. Sc. 1.



## II. DUTIES.

*What are the kinds of duty?*

All duty is right and is God's will. The voice of duty is neither more nor less than the voice of God's loving care. In it He bids us do what would do us only good, and keep from doing what would do us only harm. But as the claim of duty comes only from God's love, so it calls only for our love. Both the giving of the law and the keeping of it also are from love. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Here is the whole duty of man. Love to God and love to man,—these are the two great kinds of duty each of which will also have its own kinds.

## (I.) DUTIES TO GOD.

Love to God holds many duties.

1. *The duty of praise to God.*

God is the Maker and Ruler of all things. He is and was and is to come the Almighty. He is the All-wise



and All-holy One. Just and true is He in all His ways. This we know not simply because taught it in the Bible, for great nations know it where the Bible has not been known. Who therefore shall not fear and praise Him? It is right that we should praise Him. He does not need this; He does not need anything, seeing that He giveth to all men life and breath and all things. But we need to give Him our praise. He is so great and good that we become greater and better by praising Him. We grow in strength and goodness only as we turn to Him in praise, as the plant grows in vigor and beauty only as it turns in all its motions to the sunlight. He calls for our praise, therefore, as in every duty, not for His own sake, but for ours. But the praise for which He calls we must remember is the inner praise of the heart. It is the dwelling of the soul upon the thought of all His greatness and His glory, while it feels how far His greatness reaches and His glory shines beyond its thoughts. Praise ofttimes may be spoken in words which other ears can hear, or shown in deeds which other eyes can see, but what is thus heard and seen has value only as it shows the inner worship of the soul.

All profaneness and blasphemy, all irreverence towards God, all light thoughts or ways concerning Him, are therefore clearly wrong.



2. *The duty of thanksgiving to God.*

We praise Him for His great glory and give Him our thanks for His great goodness to us. God is good and is doing us good all the while. All the good we have is from Him. We live upon His bounty and are kept only by His constant care. We should therefore give Him our constant thanks. Thanksgiving to God for His kindness makes us also kind and keeps us tender and true-hearted before Him. There is no joy in God's gifts so deep as that which comes from taking them with a thankful heart.

3. *The duty of yielding everything we have to God.*

It is right that we should do this, for we give Him only His own when we devote to Him all that we have and are. But He calls for this, as in all His other claims, not because He needs the gift, but because the yielding is in itself a blessing.

Daniel Webster was once asked to name the grandest thought he had ever had, and the great orator and statesman at once replied: "The thought of man's responsibility to God." If it might seem hard for us to follow out the greatness of this thought and yield up everything to God, a spirit of thankfulness would always make it easy. The claims of God all come with gladness to a



thankful heart. A thankful heart overflows with devotion as a fountain overflows with streams.

4. *The duty of prayer to God.*

Go over the world, and among all peoples there will be found some knowledge of God. Also wherever He is known He is worshipped in some way, and prayer is made to Him. It is our duty to pray. God's greatness does not take Him away from us. It brings Him near. He is so great and so good that He can hear and heed our prayer, and we need so much that we cannot pray too often. Neither can we ask too great things of God. The more we think of Him, the greater does He seem; and the more we praise Him and render Him our thanks and our devotion, does our knowledge of His greatness grow, and of His willingness to hear and answer prayer. But when we ask of God great things or small, we should keep in mind that He is wiser than we, and our true prayer will ever be that we may get only the good which He sees it wise to give. The true prayer asks most of all that God's will be done.

5. *The duty of trust in God.*

God will always do right and is always wise and good. We should therefore always trust Him. While we take the good He gives us with a thankful heart, we should



trust Him also in what seems ill. He is our Father. He sees further than we ; and if He does not always give us just the good we wish, His gifts are better than our wishes. This grows clearer to us as we grow in wisdom. Even the trials which God sends us are meant to help us. They ought to make us strong, and it is only when we have let ourselves become downhearted that we lose the blessings they are sent to bring. Their fruit is always sweet when we have borne them bravely. We should therefore always keep our courage and our trust. There is nothing in the world which a human soul need ever fear except its own cowardice or want of faith.

## (II.) DUTIES TO MANKIND.

### 1. *Duties in the family.*

The human life begins in the family. With the family, therefore, begin our duties to our kind. The child at first can do nothing for himself. Everything he needs must come from some one else. He would die but for the help he has from others. A mother's love, a father's care, take him in his helplessness and tenderly provide for all his wants. The child's first duty, therefore, is to have a thankful heart. It may take him long to learn how great the pain and labor he has cost, but as he



grows in knowledge he should grow in thoughtfulness and thankfulness toward those to whom he owes so much.<sup>1</sup>

A dutiful child will trust his parents. He will be frank and open-hearted toward them. He will let them teach him. He will obey his father and mother and honor them in all things. He will be careful of their good name. If they are weak, he still will honor them because they are his parents, and will let no one reproach them. He will seek out ways to please them and will show them always love and tenderness.

This should last as long as life. The child who needs no more his parents' care should care for them. In their growing years he should grow in comfort to them. He should love and labor for them as they have done for him.

The children of the family owe each other also constant duties. A brother means a **bearer**, while a sister has been said to mean a source of gladness, and brothers and sisters should be bearers of each other's burdens and fountains of each other's joy. They should be kind and helpful to each other at all times and thus fulfil the law of love. The law of love will teach them every duty.

The law of love is the law of life. The family is like



a living body in which, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, and if one member be honored, all the members rejoice together. It is like a living tree, where the trunk supports the branches, and the branches give their strength also to the trunk, while both trunk and branches feed the ripening fruit until it falls.

2. *Duties to one's self.*

There are certain duties which would belong to any person if he were alone in all the world. In such a case there would still be a right way and wrong ways which he could take and which his own conscience would approve or condemn.

What are these duties which society does not create, and which solitude cannot destroy?

They are often called duties to one's self, and this is well enough if we keep in mind that all duties are really to God, and when we speak of duties as to ourselves or others, we do so only as we speak of debts to an agent or steward which are really due to his master alone. We are only stewards of God.

Using duties to ourselves in this sense, therefore, we may classify them as duties to the body and duties to the mind or soul.



## (1) DUTIES TO THE BODY.

A. *The duty to preserve our life.*

Our life is lent us, and is ours in no such sense that we may throw it away. We may lose it through no fault or choice of ours, — we may be called to give it up as the martyr who faces death for his faith without flinching, or as the soldier who dies in battle, fighting manfully for a just cause, — but to give up life because we are weary or because we think it useless is always cowardly, and unless one does it, not knowing what he does, is always to be condemned. A suicide is a soldier who deserts his post in the time of danger. He was trusted to be faithful and has betrayed his trust. To take one's own life could never be a duty, since this would always be a desertion of every duty.

B. *The duty to preserve our health.*

While the care of a child's health belongs at first to the parents, the child should early learn to care for this himself. He should seek and heed good counsel about this as about all other things. He should find out what would help or harm him in his food and drink and all his ways. He should keep his body clean. He should keep from every hurtful habit. What he does in childhood



will leave its trace upon his health for good or ill through all his life, and he should give it every heed.

We may be called upon, sometimes, to give up health in helping others, for all duties to ourselves fade like starlight in the sunlight when duties to others shine upon us, but we should never neglect nor waste a treasure so precious as our health.

*C. The duty of exercise.*

A weak body may grow strong by exercise. Any part of the body lacking strength may get the strength it needs by careful use. Of course this cannot always be, and certain kinds of exercise at certain times may be only harmful, but some sort of exercise is needful if we keep the strength we have or gain the strength we wish but do not have. We ought to use with wisdom all our powers of body and guard them ever against both indolence and recklessness.

Healthy exercise may be found in work as well as play. The burden of labor may be the blessedness of life.

*D. The duty of temperance.*

The duty of temperance may be seen in many ways. Our health requires it. Our self-respect requires it. The good of others requires it. The whole world requires it.



a. *Our health requires us to be temperate.*

Intemperance in food brings many evils to our health, which ought to make us watchful when and what and how much we eat. But intemperance in drink works more mischief to the health than any other single cause, and perhaps more than all other causes combined. Strong drink has been aptly called the foundation of death. Its victims far outnumber those of war and pestilence and famine, all together. It does not always slay at once, but it always endangers the health. Whether it should ever be used in sickness is a question still unsettled, but it is now quite probable that it cannot be taken by a healthy body without harm.

The harm may seem quite slight, and at the time may hardly show itself at all. A little drink may be a very little thing, but,

“It is the little rift within the lute  
That by and by will make the music mute,  
And ever widening, slowly silence all.”<sup>1</sup>

Careful experiments have shown that even the slightest dose of strong drink weakens the nerves, makes them slower in their work, and lessens the sense of

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson: *Idylls of the King. Vivien.*



touch, the sense of weight, and the sense of sight. Experiments of the same sort show the same sort of results upon other portions of the body, and make it probable that there cannot be the strongest health without the strictest abstinence from all intoxicating drink.

b. *Our self-respect requires us to be temperate.*

No one can respect himself who lets a self-indulgent habit rule him. The self-respecting man has self-control. He masters his indulgences. When he lets these master him, he is a king who has thrown away his crown, who, when he sees what he has done, feels his folly with the deepest shame. He cannot recover his self-respect until he has regained his self-control.

Indulgence in strong drink soon becomes an overpowering habit. A little indulgence is a little thread which a child can easily snap asunder. But many little threads can make a cord which all the might of the strong man cannot break. A little indulgence in strong drink, which any one might at the first have controlled, can soon be multiplied into a habit which no human power can overcome. Men have often striven piteously against this habit, only to find it as resistless as it is relentless. Unnumbered multitudes have lost their self-control and have gone down helpless and hopeless



to drunkards' graves because of a little indulgence which, at the time, seemed both small and harmless. He who would keep his self-respect and self-control, unmastered by any self-indulgence, will wisely guard himself against the slightest peril to them. A wise man will resist the very beginnings of danger.

*c. The good of others requires us to be temperate.*

We are all doing — or at least we ought to be — some sort of work for others, and we cannot do this work in the best way unless we are temperate. It has been proved by careful experiment that a healthy person can endure more hardship and perform more work without strong drink than with it. Strong drink saps the energy and lessens the power of any one. When indulgence in it has become a habit, the workman is not only weaker, but he cannot be depended upon to do his work with faithfulness. Both his body and his will have lost in strength. An intemperate person cannot be trusted in any employment. He has thrown away his own good by his intemperance, and the good of others also.

We can best help others to a better life when we are temperate. We owe it to others that we should live a life which they should copy. We have no right to any self-indulgence which is likely to lead others astray.



We should be pure and temperate, not only for our own sake, but that others may be pure and temperate also.

d. *The whole world requires that we be temperate.*

Intemperance darkens the face of the whole world. It is a curse whose terrible greatness we can hardly state in terms too strong. It destroys health and life. It ruins the body and degrades the soul. It leads astray the powers of judgment. It inflames the passions and incites to vice and crime. It blinds the moral sense. It weakens the will. It impoverishes the family. It desolates the home. It imperils every human interest. It throws a shadow over every prospect of the life that now is, and darkens that of the life that is to come. Its curse keeps on to coming generations. Children's children reap the bitter harvest of a drunken parent's sin. Well might the wise man say :—

“Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babblings? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

“They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.



“At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”<sup>1</sup>

Intemperance also shows itself in other ways than in the use of food and drink. The use of opium easily becomes a deadly habit. The use of tobacco often grows to an overmastering indulgence to which the strong man yields himself a slave. It is one of the saddest of all sights to see a man who has given up his freedom. All the pleasure in the world cannot pay for the loss one has who finds that he has chosen some indulgence which his choice cannot control. The use of tobacco often brings just this loss. It leads one to sacrifice his freedom, and for this there is and can be no sufficient compensation.

Moreover, the use of tobacco always brings to the young a loss of bodily vigor, and is often a great and manifest injury to the health of older persons. It also makes men singularly thoughtless of the comfort of others. There are few habits to which people give themselves—in the civilized world—which seem to bring with them so little concern for the comfort of others as those induced by indulgence in tobacco.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxiii. 29-32.



## (2) DUTIES TO THE MIND.

The great duty which every person owes to his mind is to bring into use all its powers. Only thus can these become strong and skilful.

Every person might have power enough if he could but use it. We are told that if we could only get in hand the force existing in a cup of water we could rend a mountain with it. And it is just as true that if the power locked up in any human mind were only set free and set at work, there would be nothing too great for it to do. The trouble is we do not learn to use our powers, and thus they lie hid or run to waste.

It is the workers, the hard workers, who succeed. "How can you do so much work?" asked a man one day of Sir Isaac Newton. "By always thinking about it," was the reply.

Every one therefore owes it to his mind to train its powers. He should study them. He should learn what they are. He should find out how to master them, and not be satisfied until he can make them do his bidding. It would be a new world if every one were fully master of himself, and this might be and ought to be.

The training of the mind helps the body also. The



body gains strength and skill by a strong and skilful mind. One can carry his mental training, just as he can his bodily training, to excess, and make it harmful, but within wise limits the body gains by all the training of the mind. Statistics show that persons with well-trained minds live longer and have better health than those who chiefly try to train their bodies.

“ So every spirit, as it is more pure,  
And hath in it the more of heavenly light,  
So it the fairer body doth procure  
To habit in, and it more fairly dight  
With cheerful grace and amiable sight;  
For of the soul the body form doth take;  
For soul is form and doth the body make.”<sup>1</sup>

One soon learns, in looking at his mind, that it does different things. It knows, it feels, it wills. Knowing, feeling, and willing show the three great powers of mind, and our duty has to do with each of these. We should shun every hindrance and seek every help in training them.

“ For he that is not wise himself, nor can  
Hearken to wisdom, is a useless man.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Spenser: Hymn in Honor of Beauty.

<sup>2</sup> Hesiod: Works and Days.



*A. The training of our power of knowing.*

There are three kinds or ways of knowing which belong to every human mind. There is the way in which we know what we see and hear and smell and taste and touch, and this we call the way of knowledge through the senses. Then there is the way in which we know by thinking over all that the senses have given us, and this we call knowledge through the thought or judgment. Then there is another way of knowledge, wider and higher, which gladdens the human mind by revealing to it not simply that which is, but that which ought to be. And this knowledge — the knowledge which makes us truly wise — may be fitly called the knowledge of wisdom. How then shall we train each of these powers of knowing?

They should all be trained to find the truth of things. Truth alone has power, and only in knowing the truth do we become both strong and free.

*a.* Our senses should be trained to observe things as they are. We should learn to note carefully what takes place in the world around us. Unnumbered lessons of truth and wisdom for us are on every hand, and we can learn them if we keep an open eye. We may be surprised to find, by careful watching, how much more



there is than we had ever noticed in our most familiar things.

Robert-Houdin, the French conjurer, taught his child to walk quickly past the great shops in Paris, and at the same time to observe closely, that he might afterwards recall what was displayed in their windows, and the boy's success made many people marvel. But such success would cease to be a wonder to any one who should carefully train his senses to observe the truth of things around him. We cannot easily set limits to what any one might gain if he should carefully keep watch of what his senses might show him. It is wrong to be idle or heedless when such great gains may be so near.

*b.* In caring for our thoughts we should, in the first place, learn to study. To study is to think **steadily** upon something, and this we should do until we get the power of close and steady thought. We should put our heart in our work. He who has his heart in his learning, said a Greek orator,<sup>1</sup> will soon have his learning in his heart.

To gain strength of thought and skill in thought, we need be careful, most of all, that all our thoughts be

<sup>1</sup> Isocrates.



true. We should accustom ourselves to accuracy in all things. We should be watchful lest our thoughts be warped by our wishes, or dwarfed by want of knowledge. We should be constantly learning and constantly willing to be taught, so that neither our ignorance nor our self-will should blind us to the truth.

c. To gain the light of highest wisdom we should set ourselves where the light shines. We should familiarize ourselves with the highest things in beauty, truth, and goodness, and turn away from what is ugly, false, and wrong. It is the good which makes good. It is the knowledge of what is best which inspires us to attain what is best. It was when Correggio first saw some of the greatest pictures in the world that he cried out: "Thank God, I, too, can be a painter." And so ever the works as well as the

"Lives of great men all remind us,  
We can make our lives sublime."<sup>1</sup>

B. *The training of our power of feeling.*

We should be watchful of our feelings as well as of our thoughts. It is both a great privilege and a great peril to be able to feel. Nothing is better for a person

<sup>1</sup> Longfellow: Psalm of Life.



than strong and deep feeling when led by wisdom, and nothing worse than the same feeling when left to folly. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and we should keep this fountain of our feelings, therefore, with all diligence.

There are three kinds of feeling to which every one should give his special care. These are those belonging to the love of pleasure, the love of admiration, and the love of property.

In caring for these, we should see that our love of pleasure should be pure, that it should be helpful, and that it should never give way to despondency ; that our love of admiration should make us worthy to be admired ; and that our love of property should be kept free from covetousness, from avarice, and from gambling.

*a. The love of pleasure.*

(a) We should keep our pleasures pure.

Our love of pleasure should never cause a blush or give a sense of shame. It should always be a stream of gladness, pure and clear. Whatever pleasure is impure leaves a stain upon the soul, which by and by becomes a sting.

If we would keep our pleasures pure, we should keep our thoughts pure. Our feelings are fed and strength-



ened by our thoughts, and we should shut out every thought which might bring in a wrong desire. The books we read, the talk we hear, the scenes on which our fancy dwells, do much to turn and tinge the current of our feelings, and we should watch them all.

We should guard against the early impulse to impure pleasures. Evil wishes are foes which we should fight as soon as they appear. If we resist them, they will flee; but if we dally with them, we are already overcome.

Of course the first impure deed, however small it might seem, will be shunned by every one who would keep his pleasures pure.

(b) We should keep our pleasures helpful.

All our pleasures ought to do us good. They should refresh us like the sunlight and the air. In every pleasure we should find renewal of our strength. It should be to us a re-creation. A pleasure which harms body or mind must be wrong.

It is right that we should have amusements. Everybody needs them, but all amusements are not therefore right; neither are any right at every time and place. Play has its place in life as well as work, and we should keep it in its place.

The joy of play is a **jewel** which one need not be



ashamed to wear, but one does not wear his jewels all the while, nor is everything that glitters gold.

(c) Our love of pleasure should keep us from despondency.

True pleasure is true health, and to the healthy soul, if weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning. The healthy soul looks for the light whenever it feels the darkness. It does not let itself be cast down by its sorrows. However dark the night, it knows the day will come. We should keep our souls in health all the while. They should be like the sea, whose surface only is disturbed by storms.

*b. The love of admiration.*

This is not, in itself, to be condemned. We may properly desire the good opinion of others. All human fellowship would cease if no one cared what others thought about him. But to desire the admiration which we know is not deserved is like feeding on the fabled fruit, which was all fair outside but filled with ashes. To wish it would show an appetite depraved, and to attempt to live upon it would do away with life. The only honor which we ought to wish is that which has been won first of all from our own hearts. If we are worthy of our own approval, we shall soon or late



have also that of others ; and if we are unworthy, their approval could but give us in the end a terrible disgust.

We should therefore guide and guard our love of admiration. We should guard ourselves against desiring what has no foundation. We should seek greatness rather than a show of greatness, and honor rather than applause. There is wondrous wisdom in the words : "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."<sup>1</sup> If we have true worth, we need not be disturbed by thinking others do not know it, and we need not exert ourselves to make it known. There is never any light which does not shine, and true gold needs no gilding.

*c. The love of property.*

The love of property needs even more watch and care than does the love of pleasure or the love of admiration, for it deadens the conscience more than either of these. A person who has let his love of pleasure or his love of admiration lead him far astray has times when he clearly sees, and is bitterly ashamed of his folly ; but he whom the love of property controls seems to have well nigh lost the sense of shame. The miser does not know his **misery**, and is a wretch beyond compare.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiv. 11.



To keep the love of property from mastering us, we should foster the grace of giving. If we have but little, we can probably find something we can give to those whose need is more than ours. The love of property may be quite as strong, and may as much need to be broken in the man of little means as in the man of millions.

For keeping watch and care over the love of property, we need to guard especially against covetousness and avarice and gambling.

(a) Covetousness.

To covet anything is to wish for it earnestly. For some things this is right. We cannot wish too earnestly for purity and goodness. But to covet what belongs to another which we could have only by depriving him of his possessions is a selfish wish which if encouraged takes away all freedom from our feelings. To covet property soon makes a man a slave.

(b) Avarice.

Covetousness is the greed to get, and avarice the greed to keep what we have got. The avaricious man hoards his money; he loves it for its own sake, and will not spend it for his farther pleasure. He is not happy. He seeks for happiness from his hoardings, but his



increasing gains only increase his misery. No beggar is more dependent, and no slavery more ignoble.

(c) Gambling.

To gamble is to risk one's possession of anything upon chance. The gambler is willing thus to risk what he has in the hope of gaining more. But in doing this he gives up reason and takes chance instead of reason as his guide. This is, in the exact sense, unreasonable, and therefore always wrong. Whether the amount risked be little or large, no one can let it turn on chance without turning himself away from reason. For this his reason, if it be not altogether dead, will make him assuredly ashamed.

Gambling weakens, and if kept up destroys, one's sense of honor. It is dishonorable to get gain from another which he does not freely give, and for which he gets no fair return. This dishonorable act the successful gambler always does; and as the unsuccessful gambler is always willing to do the same, both parties are guilty of dishonor.

Gambling is not necessarily dishonest, for both parties in the game may have a clear agreement to abide the issue; but it is always degrading, for no person has the right to enter into any such agreement. It is, more-



over, very likely to be dishonest, for the gambler can hardly play without the wish that he may get that for which he knows there is no fair return.

Betting, for any amount however small, is the same sort of wrong. It is the setting aside of reason which should always rule. When a person does it, he blindfolds himself, even though his first and clearest duty is to see.

*C. The training of our power of willing.*

*a.* Our free will is the crown of all our powers, and our first duty to it is to maintain its freedom. Freedom is obedience to what is true and right, and to keep free, we must keep the right rule.

“He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,  
And all are slaves beside.”<sup>1</sup>

He who committeth sin is the slave of sin, and no person should ever consent to be a slave. He should guard his liberty with closest watchfulness against the tyranny of custom, the tyranny of other people's opinions, and, most of all, the tyranny of his own desires. A free will is free from wilfulness.

*b.* Every person also has a duty to his will to make it

<sup>1</sup> Cowper: The Task, Book V.



a strong will. A strong will is a free will full of energy. It holds fast to the truth, and does with its might what it finds to do. It has the valor which is the essence of virtue. It is the will of a hero courageous to attack what is wrong, and brave to defend what is right. It never fears to tell the truth or keep its word.

A strong will is very different from a selfish will or a stubborn will. A selfish will is always blind, and a stubborn will is always narrow; but a strong will sees clear and far, and therefore neither fears nor falters. Every one can draw from the fountain of his freedom this living stream of energy if he chooses, and every person ought to choose it with unfailing purpose.

A strong will is always ready for its duty. It needs no urging. Mr. Lincoln's first call for troops was sent out the fifteenth of April, 1861, and on the nineteenth of that same month Grant was drilling a company of volunteers at Galena.

We may show our strong will in the life of every day. Every one has foes to fight, and may be a hero. Virtue is only another word for bravery, and virtue and **heroism** are the same word. There is a constant call on every one of us to be brave. Our love of ease or self-indulgence is ever liable to set itself against our sense of



right and duty, and unless we use all our strength of will we may at any time be overcome. We should, therefore, never let ourselves be taken unawares. We should be on our guard against what might seem little dangers. Our hardest foes to master may often lurk in some little self-indulgence. Let us look for these and be ever wary. We should never think a course to be right simply because it is pleasant. The right road is always pleasant at the end, but is often a thorny path at the beginning. He who would be a hero will never turn aside from hard things because they are hard. He will never shirk an irksome duty or give himself to play when he has hard work to do.

The strong will is a persevering will. It holds fast what is good. It has set itself on doing right, and does not give up to hardships, or turn aside from any danger. He who is resolutely willing to do his duty, as every one ought to be, is never discouraged. To be discouraged, is to show a lack of bravery, and thus to fail in virtue.

He who has the strong will can say No. He can resist all enticements to do wrong. He can stand alone against all others in what he sees to be right. This is often the hardest thing that any one can do. It is easy



to follow others, but to stand out against them when we see that they are wrong, shows the rarest and the hardest kind of courage. He who can do this is a hero.

### (3) DUTIES TO OTHERS.

We have been talking about duties to ourselves, which would lay their claim upon any person, even if he were alone upon the earth. But no person is alone upon the earth, and no one has the right to shut himself up, or hold himself aloof from others. If he should try to live in solitude, he would still have social duties, and these would bind him so long as he should remain alive. We cannot hide ourselves so secretly that duties to others will not find us.

Our duties to our kind reach as far as human beings can be found. Human hearts are bound together, the world over, and nothing can happen to one anywhere, without affecting others everywhere. To see our duties to our kind therefore, we should have wide views. While we have special duties to our friends, our family, our country, we should guard ourselves against the narrow thought, which would satisfy itself with these, and which does not reach to human life wherever found.

Owe no man anything, but to love one another, covers all our duties to others.



This maxim reaches over two great fields. It takes in what is due to a man's rights and what is due to his needs.

Every human being has certain rights which he may claim until they are forfeited by his own act, and beyond this also he possesses certain needs which remain until removed by the act of another. The rights mark his independence, while his needs show how little any human being can stand alone. What is due to a person's rights is the duty of *justice*, what is due to his needs is the duty of *kindness*. These two, then,—the duty of justice and the duty of kindness,—are what each man owes to his fellow-men.

(1) *Duties of justice.*

Justice requires every person to render what is due to every other person's rights. As there are various rights, so there are various duties.

A. *The duty of courtesy.*

The first duty of justice to others is that of courtesy. Every human being owes this duty to every other. Such is the dignity of human nature, and such the rights which it may claim.

The duty of courtesy is quite independent of rank or station. It is more and better to be a man than to be a



king. Men are children of God, and no station can be so glorious as to outshine or so ignoble as to obscure the light of this high parentage. We should therefore honor all men, the poor and the weak as truly as the rich and the strong. The vicious man or the criminal, however abandoned, is still a man, and however we may abhor his vice or crime, we may not abhor him.

The duty of courtesy requires respectful treatment of every human being by every other wherever this can be shown. There are forms which common use has set for showing this respect, but the great thing needed is a respectful heart, and this will always show itself in a respectful way. We should therefore cultivate such a heart. We should seek to be respectful. We should accustom ourselves to courteous thoughts and ways. We should be civil in word and deed. All vulgarity or rudeness of speech or manner will be shunned by every heart which values virtue.

B. *The duty of doing no harm to another's life.*

To take the life of another, who has not forfeited it by his own act, is felt by all to be one of the greatest of crimes. We may and should defend ourselves from attack, and he who attacks us has thereby given up his right to his life to a degree which permits us to take it,



if necessary to preserve our own. Both the courts and our own consciences, in such a case, acquit us of all wrong. But if we strike a needless blow, even in self-defence, we are not justified.

To plan to take another's life is condemned by the courts and by the common judgment of men, even if the plan is not carried out. And to be willing to make such a plan, even if never noticed by the courts, would be felt by every healthy conscience to be wrong; so sacred is human life.

The duty of doing no harm to another's life forbids all hurt in wantonness or ill-intent to another's body. All thoughtless sport, all malice or revenge which brings upon another's body pain or injury, is not only doing wrong to the doer's own soul in his exercise of unlawful passion and his want of self-restraint, but grossly wrongs the other's rights. The duty we have already noticed of preserving our own life and health makes it clearly our duty ever to regard the bodily well-being of another.

*C. The duty to respect another's right to freedom.*

We must keep in mind that it is the truth only which makes us free. True freedom is obedience to the truth. One is therefore free, not because he can do what he



chooses, but because he does and chooses only his duty to the truth. If every one were to do only what he might choose to do without regard to what he ought to choose, every one would be a slave, and there could be no society among men. One has the right to freedom because he has the power to know and choose the truth.

All men are born with an equal right to freedom. They are not born with equal powers of body or of mind, or with equal possession of many other privileges, but the right of freedom comes with their life, and belongs to all alike. The child needs control and care and education to fit him for the use of this high gift, and older persons still need law and government to restrain and teach them so that they may know and keep their freedom. So also wrong-doers become the slaves of wrong and need to be restrained. But all these looked at closely only make more evident the rule that freedom is the birthright alike of every human soul. Every one ought to see this as fully in another as in himself. It is as much his duty to respect another's freedom as to keep his own.

This great duty has various branches, as there are various fields of freedom.



*a. Freedom of person.*

Slavery in the sense that one man may be owned as property, and be bought and sold by other men, is now acknowledged to be a wrong, and has well-nigh ceased throughout the Christian world. But there are other ways of interfering with another's personal freedom still found among us, which have all the wrong and sometimes all the cruelty of slavery. These are often seen, as when the rich and strong bind the poor and weak, or when the poor and weak band together to put burdens upon the rich and strong; when the employer exacts undue conditions of his workmen, or the workman of his employer, or of his fellow-workman; or—to put them all together—when one uses any power or privilege which he possesses to hamper any power or privilege of another.

We must remember all the while that human beings have their right to freedom simply because they are human, and not because of any power or privilege which only some possess. And when we fail to think of this, and let our thoughts be led in ways which keep another from exactly the same freedom as our own, we have turned ourselves away from the truth, and have put upon ourselves the same bondage which we seek to bring upon him.



b. *Freedom of thought.*

It is very easy to dislike those who think differently from ourselves. We are apt to treat them harshly. Some of the greatest cruelties have come from the unwillingness of people to tolerate a different way of thinking from their own.

But all this is wrong. We have no right to judge another, or to condemn him for his opinions. We do not know his inner thoughts as he does. If we could see the reasons for them as they seem to him, and could know the exact interpretation he gives them in his inner soul, we might for aught we know approve them. Each mind must always have some light which does not shine upon another. And where so much is hid we may not condemn.

We ought to practise ourselves and yield to others perfect freedom of thought. We should watch closely that we ourselves do not take narrow views, and are not blinded by our prejudices or our passions. We should bring all our judgments into the light of truth, and when we find this light we should let it shine on other minds as well as on our own. In this way only should we seek to change their thoughts. It is not the uncontrolled thought, but the thought controlled by the truth, which is truly free.



Moreover if we could control another's thought by any other force than that of the truth, we should find that, when its freedom had ceased, the thought itself had ceased. Thought cannot live if enslaved. The light of truth is the only living power of thought, and when this is given up for any other guidance, the thought has lost its life and light. All intolerance, or persecution for opinion's sake, is the same sort of folly as would be the putting out of a person's eyes in order to make him see.

*c. Freedom of conscience.*

Conscience we have called the eye and ear with which the soul sees and hears the light and voice of duty. It is our most precious possession. It is altogether priceless. But to keep the conscience clear and keen and ever growing, we must keep it free. The only mastery which should control it is that of the truth, in which alone is freedom. We should be careful lest our own consciences be dimmed or dulled by putting anything in the place of their own discernment of duty, and we should be just as careful to maintain the freedom of another's conscience. We may proclaim the truth, but we may not persecute another who will not hear or heed it. To his own master



he standeth or falleth, and who are we, that we should judge him?

d. *Freedom of conduct.*

Freedom, as we have so often noted, is obedience to the truth. It is therefore always dutiful. It is the child of law, and is therefore always law-abiding. When our own self-wills are put in the place of the truth, or our passions or desires rule us, instead of duty, this is slavery, and not freedom. Unbounded liberty is as different from unlimited license, as peace is different from war, or life from death.

Keeping this in mind, we need never fear the enlargement of liberty. On the other hand, we should desire this and labor for it. Wherever the truth is, there is freedom. Whenever therefore we seek to give freedom its widest range in the conduct of men, we should first and foremost seek to bring upon men's minds the clear light and unerring voice of the truth.

“ Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!”<sup>1</sup>

D. *The duty of respecting another's right to property.*

Property is what one has the right to use as he will. There are two kinds of property. That which can be carried about with the owner, as goods or money, is

<sup>1</sup> Browning: In a Balcony.



called personal property; and that which is fixed and cannot be carried about, as land and houses, is called real estate.

There can be no property where there is no freedom. Anything which has never been owned can never have an owner until some one takes it who is free to use it as he will. A slave can never own property.

The right to property therefore always comes, in the first place, from what some one has freely done. He has taken what had no owner and made it his by his own free deed. His first property comes from his free appropriation of what nature furnishes for his free use. Then he adds to this his labor, and makes something of use or beauty which nature had not made. This he owns. It is his property because he has made it with his own free work out of what he also owned. If he is the sole producer, the product belongs solely to him. He can give it away, he can leave it to his descendants, and thus yield to others his right over it, or he may be summoned to surrender it to society, as he may his life, when some high duty calls him; but till something of this sort comes in, he has a right to his property as he has to his freedom or his life, and with this right another may not interfere.



A person may misuse his property so that it may harm both him and others, but this is true of every privilege, and ought not to hinder us from seeing that the rights to property are sacred rights which every one should sacredly maintain. If these rights were disregarded, all peace and freedom would disappear, civilized life would sink to that of the savage, and that of the savage would soon reach that of the brute.

*a.* The right to property makes it wrong to steal.

To steal is to take for our own pleasure, and without the consent of the owner, anything belonging to another. It may be secret or open, it may be for little things or large things, but in every case it is clearly wrong. Thou shalt not steal is a very old commandment, but the human conscience never ceases to bear witness to its authority and power.

However small the thing stolen, to steal is never small. The stealing shows a willingness to disregard another's rights, and this cannot be measured by the size or value of what is stolen. The right of the owner to the least part of his property, is as complete as his right to the greatest, and he who would take the least has shown the choice which would take the greatest also if opportunity should favor.



b. All attempts to gain another's property by fraud are of course wrong. All cheating at trade, all false weights and measures, all neglect to pay an honest debt, all dishonest dealings of any kind, would be abhorred by every pure soul. An honest person is honest everywhere and in everything.

E. *The duty of sustaining another's good name.*

We ought not only to show courtesy to others when we are with them, but we have a duty to their good name when absent from them. A good name is very precious. It is rather to be chosen than great riches. If therefore we rob a person of it by our word or deed, we have robbed him of what is worth more to him than silver or gold, and the stain of the thief rests upon us.

To speak evil of others, to hold them up to ridicule or reproach, is a wrong which reaches farther than perhaps we think. Society depends upon the good name of its members. People could not live together but for their good name. To destroy the good repute of a single person is to disturb the order and darken the peace of the whole community. For this cause the civil law puts heavy penalties upon what we call slander and libel. Slander is a statement made by word of mouth against another's good name, and libel is a statement of the



same sort put in writing or in print. These are crimes against good order. They weaken our respect for others. They open the door to the invasion of every right.

When evil deeds are threatening others, it may be right for us to make the evil-doer known. It is right to testify in court to all our knowledge of a crime, but it is only when society needs the knowledge for its own defence that it becomes right to disclose it.

*F. The duty of truthfulness to others.*

We have already noticed the duty of keeping all our inner thoughts obedient to the truth. Thus only do we gain freedom of thought and strength of thought.

But we have the wonderful gift of speech by which we can tell our thoughts to others. The gift of speech is given to us that we may give to others what we think and feel. It ought, therefore, to be truthful. It has become all perverted, and has lost its meaning, if it is untruthful. The untruthful person has put the mint's stamp upon a piece of base metal. His word is a counterfeit coin. When we say to others what we do not think or feel, we have used the power of speech to overthrow the very purpose for which this power was given to us. We could not utter a greater



reproach upon the Wisdom which has endowed us with this high gift, and in our own secret hearts also we feel that we could not utter a greater reproach against ourselves. Untruthfulness is cowardice and treachery. Every conscience feels its baseness. There is nothing we resent so quickly or with so keen a feeling as the charge that we have been untruthful.

We should guard ourselves against violating the truth in what we call little things. We should weigh our words and should not speak at random. We ought to live so that every one should trust us. Our promised word should be very sacred to us. We should never make a promise which is not right, but a righteous promise should be kept though it cost us dearly. Regulus kept his promise to the Carthaginians, though he knew it would cost him his life, and the whole world honors him for it wherever the story is told.

Moreover, untruthfulness would cause society to disappear. We cannot live with others in unity and freedom if we are not truthful.

*G. The duty of doing our work for others honestly and well.*

It is related that Hiero, king of Phlius, once said to Pythagoras: "Tell me, O lover of wisdom, what is



thy occupation." To which Pythagoras replied: "O Hiero, thou knowest the manner at the Olympian games, how that some come to contest for the prize, and some to sell their goods, and some to see their friends and have good cheer, while others come simply to look on. Know then that I belong to this last class. I am occupied solely with looking on." But in saying this he forgot, as Lord Bacon has remarked, that in this world it is permitted only to God and the angels to be lookers-on.

No man liveth unto himself. No one can find his own wants supplied without some help from others. Every one has therefore something to do for others in return for what they do for him. We are servants of each other, and we ought each to see that we render our service honestly and well. We may be very weak, and what we can do may seem very small; but if we can give for the service given to us only a grateful look or word, we should give it from the heart. It is not the size of the deed but the spirit of the doer which signifies.

In the constant work going on in the world, the work of employers and employed, there should be no need of any other eye to watch the worker than his



own. No watchful eye should be so clear and close as that with which we each should watch ourselves in all our work. Every work will, by and by, find out its worker and will bring its true return of honor or disgrace. To the doer belongs his deed. "Why do you take such pains with that part of your work which is not seen?" one asked of a great Greek artist. "The gods will see it," was the calm reply.

Y H. *The duty of giving to others a good example.*

Every person's life is a photographic plate on which, with more or less distinctness, the forms of the other lives around him are imprinted. We do not mingle much with others' lives without the likelihood that we shall take on somewhat of their likeness. Evil communications corrupt good manners, while a soft answer turneth away wrath. Instruction by precept has very little force in comparison with the incitement of example.

Every one is thus moved by example, and every one has the duty of setting a good example before others. We should be watchful, lest we harm another by our word or deed. We should guard our habits and our constant conduct, that others be not thereby led astray. He who purposely tempts another to do



wrong is himself guilty of a double wrong, — the wrong wrought by the deed done, and the wrong of leading the doer of it astray; while he who thoughtlessly puts temptation in another's way ought to have been thoughtful, and is not guiltless.

(2) *Duties of kindness.*

We have not done our full duty to others when we have been only just. We ought to be kind as well. Justice strives to satisfy the rights of others, but kindness seeks to supply their needs. These two are very different. Justice would set human lives as trees are planted in an orchard, each one in its place, and each one pruned and kept from trenching on another's ground. But kindness grafts one human life upon another and makes of many lives one living growth. Kindness would join all lives in unity. It does not simply move where justice leads. It does not shine upon the good alone. Its light falls also on the evil and unthankful. It has its sympathy for every sorrow. It would supply all needs. Justice is exactly honest. It pays all debts as they are due. But kindness does not hold the scales to balance debt and credit. It does not simply seek exact adjustments. It has the open eye and open hand, to



see and succor needy human lives, even where there is no honest claim.

That kindness from each human being to all, and from all to each, is a duty needs no proof. If proof were needed, we should find it in the common speech which calls charity the god-like virtue, and which brands unkindness as inhuman. Let us note the calls for kindness, and the ways in which it should be shown.

*A. The relief of poverty.*

There are always the poor. If all the riches of the world were divided equally among all people, some would use their portion wastefully, and some would use theirs wisely; some would soon lose all that they had received, and some would soon gain much more, making soon again as great an inequality as ever. What then shall we do for the poor? If the poor have been impoverished by fraud, if they have been deprived dishonestly of what is rightly theirs, justice should find a remedy and right the wrong. But it is only a part, perhaps the smaller part, of the poverty of the world which comes from the unjust dealings of man with man. Vice and self-indulgence, sickness, ignorance, and want of thrift, great and unavoidable calamities



ties, give constant cause for poverty. If all men's dealings, therefore, with each other were done justly and honestly, the poor would still be with us, and justice would know no way to reach them. Philosophers who would regulate human life altogether by the principles of justice have no means for the removal of poverty but to let it alone.

But kindness is not satisfied with this. Kindness moves towards the poor. It calls upon the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak. It bids us seek out want and destitution that we may give relief. If we open our hearts, as we should, to what is kind, we should be generous as well as just; we should go to the poor without waiting for them to come to us that we may help them. If we can do but little, we shall do what we can, if we are truly kind.

But we should be careful here. Charity should be wise. It is quite easy to try to help the poor by ways which only harm them. The poor are human, and should be led by all our efforts for them to a larger sense of manliness. Our gifts should not impair their self-respect or self-reliance. Otherwise they had better not be given. We should not seek simply to lift the burden from the poor, but to lift the poor them-



selves above their burdens by the better thoughts and larger life we bring them. Gifts of money, gifts of food or clothing, gifts which satisfy a bodily want and go no farther, are like water poured upon a desert, which the desert soon drinks up and is as dry as it was before. But gifts by which we reach the inner life, and through their bodily help give help also to the soul, open a living spring in the desert and make the barren land a fruitful field. True kindness is not satisfied until the depths of human life are reached and renovated.

*B. The readiness to receive help.*

It is more blessed to give than to receive, and if we are truly kind, we should be as willing to receive as to give. True kindness is not coy of proffered favors. It receives them readily. It would be as unkind to others, as it would be wanting in true self-respect, to try to stand aloof when others try to help us. Genuine kindness is as different from the shy and selfish spirit, which is willing to receive only just what has been given, as it is from the cold and calculating spirit, which will give only just as much as has been received.

*C. The seeking the good of others always.*

If we are truly kind, we shall do all the good to others



that we can. We shall give them our sympathy in their sorrow and be ever willing to reach the helping hand for their relief. We shall be watchful for occasions when we can render others help. If we see a threatening danger to another which he does not see, kindness would prompt us to guard him from it as we would ourselves. If we are in a company where another's good name is brought into reproach, true kindness will not permit us to stay without some sign, at least, of our disapprobation. Kindness would lead to a much more careful treatment than justice requires of the person, property, and reputation of another. Kindness guards all rights as carefully as does justice itself. But it gives its help beyond what any rights can claim. True kindness is true charity, and charity never faileth.

*D. Kindness to animals.*

The duty of kindness is not fully done unless we are also kind to animals. Cruelty to animals is a crime by the laws of many states. In common speech it is called inhuman. This is not because the animals have rights, but because no person ought to cause a needless pain to any creature.

Animals were given to us for our use, and we should use them wisely. To be cruel to them or thoughtless



of their pain is to make ourselves hard-hearted and indifferent to human sufferings as well. The merciful man is merciful to his beast.

“He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.”<sup>1</sup>

#### (4.) DUTIES TO GOVERNMENT.

There could not be any human society without some sort of government. If there were only two persons in the land, there would be need, when these were brought together, of something to tell how each should act towards the other. If more than two should come together, this need would be still more apparent, and where there are multitudes, nothing can be clearer than that the very existence of their society depends upon the existence of something which controls their intercourse with one another. This control is government.

But such a need for government brings no burden. Government is one of the greatest of blessings. Though some kinds of government are much better than others, any kind is better than none; for to be

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge: *The Ancient Mariner*.



without government would mean the destruction of society, and this would mean the destruction of mankind.

We have therefore clearly certain duties to the government of the land in which we live.

(1) *The duty of obedience.*

The rules which the government lays down for our control are called laws. These laws are very precious. In a free land they are the source and strength of freedom. They ought therefore to be joyously obeyed. It is true they are not always perfect; they are sometimes very imperfect. But unless they call upon us to do what our conscience tells us we ought not to do, we should obey them, seeking always, by all lawful means, to make them better.

This duty of obedience is just as binding when we are travelling or sojourning in a foreign land as when we are in our own.

(2) *The duty of service.*

We owe the government more than simple obedience. We should serve it in every way we can. We should not only be law-abiding ourselves, but should seek to make others law-abiding also. If we have the right to vote, we should use the right and cast our vote



honestly. If we are called upon to serve the government in official station, it may be right for us to give up cherished plans for other work, that we may do this service. If there is a call for military service, we may have a duty to respond. We should do whatever lies within our power to make the government under which we live wiser and stronger.

(3) *The duty of paying tribute.*

The government must tax its subjects for its own support. It has no other means of support, and the subject should render this support willingly and honestly. He should not evade taxation. He should be ready to pay his fair proportion of what the government needs. All concealment of his property to avoid taxation is a shirking of his duty.



### III. THE CULTURE OF THE MORAL LIFE.

THERE can be but one straight way between two points, but there can be many crooked ones; and so there can be but one right path in a given case, though unnumbered wrong ones. It is easy to go astray, and we need great care to walk aright. The old Greeks used to call wrong-doing a missing of the mark, and this is easy, while to hit the mark needs a clear eye, a steady hand, and careful training.

How shall we most surely walk in the right path? How shall we best gain this skill in virtue?

We need to remember first that it is only the good which makes good. Evil produces only evil. We do not learn to do right by doing wrong.

We may make a mistake or meet a misfortune, which having suffered once we may thereby learn to avoid the second time. But to do wrong is more than a mistake or a misfortune. It is a misbehavior which weakens the will to do right, and makes it easier to do wrong than it was before. To do wrong is to lose strength; and



even if it could ever teach one anything, his wrongdoing would lessen his power to follow the teaching.

But to do wrong does not teach one. This is very wonderful, but very clearly true. Any one who watches human life will see the fact on every hand. Wrongdoing does not give the doer any light, but only makes his darkness deeper. Wrongdoing is always a deceiver. It puts a lie in the place of the truth, and hides the difference between them. The deception is, to be sure, a wilful one; but there are none so blind as those who will not see. Nothing is more difficult than to dislodge the delusions with which we find persons constantly entangled by their wrong-doings.

Neither would one be taught if he had nothing but the wrong-doing of another to teach him. If we had been born in the dark, and had never seen or heard of the light, we should not know even the darkness. The darkness has no power to make anything known. It cannot even make itself known. The light is sufficient to show itself, and is needed to make known the darkness. It is only by the light that we can see.

In like manner, if we were doing wrong all the while, and there were nothing but wrong-doing all around us, we should be blind and dead to all thought, either of



the right or wrong, and nothing could ever awaken us or make us alive but the light and life of goodness coming to us from some one good and doing good.

It is only by the right that we can know the wrong. The wrong alone can give no knowledge of anything. It is like the darkness; it cannot even make itself known.

Hence it is that the danger of wrong-doing as seen in its results is not sufficient to warn us. The right only gives us any warning. The pitfall in our path does not warn us by its yawning darkness until we see it by a gleam of light.

In like manner, however terrible wrong-doing may be, it never terrifies until, from some source, there breaks through it a revealing of the light, like the lightning from a cloud. It is one of the saddest facts of human life, and as strange as it is sad, that men who follow vice can keep their course unchanged, notwithstanding the destruction which other eyes can clearly see awaiting them.

We do not therefore improve men by giving them bad examples to study. Life alone begets life, and life is nourished only by life.

It is not by the precepts of moral living, but by the



example of a moral life, that we are truly taught how to live. The improvement of our moral life, its wise and fruitful culture, will only come as we come close to those whose lives of justice and of kindness, of purity and of truth, both show us what goodness is, and kindle us to goodness also. And if we can ever find a life to show us what the Perfect Man upon the earth can do and be, a life of perfect love, so just and kind, so pure and true, that evil-doing fades before it as the night before the morning, and goodness blossoms at its coming as the flowers at the coming of the sun, will it not be wise to bring ourselves where this Light of Life can shine upon us and give us light and life and healing in its beams?







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